

<sup>Base</sup>  
LISTEN



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## LISTEN

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## Number Two

## CII DE LOS CANTARES

## Ezra Pound

This I had from Kalupso

who had it from Hermes

'eleven literates and, I suppose,

Dwight L. Morrow

the body elected,

residence required, not as in England

'A cargo of Iron'

lied Pallas

and as to why Penelope waited

keinas . . . eOrgei. line 639. Leucothoe

rose as an incense bush,

resisting Apollo,

Orchamus, Babylon

And after 500 years

still offered that shrub to the sea-gull,

Phaecians,

she being of Cadmus line

The snow's lace washed here as sea-foam

不

But the lot of 'em, Yeats, Possum, Old Wyndham

had no ground to stand on

## Black shawls still worn for Demeter

in Venice,

in my time,

my young time

OIOS TELES AI ERGON . . . EROS TE

## The cat talks

Ἡώ (mao) with a greek inflection.

Barley is the marrow of men,

40 centess' in my time

an orzo.

At Procope, one franc fifteen for a luncheon  
and ten centimes tip for the waiter. Noi altri borghesi  
could not go down into the piazza. We thought we could control  
And that ye sail over lithe water . . .

under eyelids . . .

Winkleman noted the eyelids,

Yeats two months on a sonnet of Ronsard's.

' Jacques Père ' on a sign near Le Portel,  
and belgians would pronounce it.

Eva has improved that line about Freiheit.

' 50 more years on The Changes '  
or is said to have said that he could have.

Swan broke his knee cap on landing  
having scaled that 30 foot wall,  
and maintaining his serenity,  
another chap hung all night in the trail ropes  
and saw two other men fall.

Took the Z for the tail of the KatZe

vide Frobenius on relative Dummheit of pupil and teacher

' The libraries ' (Ingrid) ' have no Domville.' Jan 1955  
as was natural

' pseudos d'ouk . . . ei gar pepneumenos '

seed barley with the sacrifice (Lacedaemon)

But with Leucothoe's mind in that incense  
all Babylon could not hold it down.  
' for my bitch eyes ' in Ilion

copper and wine like a bear cub's  
in sunlight, thus Atalant

the colour as *aithiops*  
the gloss probably  
*oinops*

as lacquer in sunlight





## SHADE OF AN OBOE

Byron Colt

*' The beautiful sun does that . . .*

The city's fiery lyric on the water in the uterine smell of marsh,  
 A bed of black fire opals and industrial diamonds,  
 And the storm leaking brightness in silent ambience,  
 With starlight, volcanoes, a cache of steel weapons,  
 The chrysanthemum on the fuselage of the suicide plane —  
 Solar vigour in dark hives, the weight of joy in the sunlit object  
     heavy as shot,  
 Eden in the mind vibrations away, sea-lavender and molten yellow,  
 Sun impinging on storm, the god deferred,

The landscape platinum in light — Toledo —  
 Dodging moons and storms, the rain sewn with flashes of sleet,  
 Among torsos and archives, the face of Caesar, ' c'est un feu noir,  
 Untendable as fire-damp burning in underground seams,  
 Or the nymphal stage of beautiful rockets with names of animals  
     and gods,  
 Finned, poised on shock diamonds and exhaust flame,  
 Their hearts timed to sidereal movements,

Light as sycamore flax in the tempest,  
 As the Mediterranean genius, Spire, Kazantzakis, with poets and  
     gods in chrysalis,  
 Flourishing in nocturnal flowers,  
 Sparkling with kingfishers and naked verbs,  
 In mushrooms soaked by aberrant lightning,  
 With mare's-tails and spruces, dung turned to nitrates,  
 Vigor in the nest of the sunburst,  
 Transits, fire searching a mouth.

## THE VALUE OF GOLD

Thom Gunn

The hairs turn gold upon my thigh,  
 And I am gold beneath the sun,  
 Losing pale features that the cold  
 Pinched, pointed, for an instant I  
 Turn blind to features, being one  
 With all that has, like me, turned gold.

I finish up the can of beer,  
 And lay my head on the cropped grass :  
 Now bordering flag, geranium,  
 And mint-bush tower above me here,  
 Which colour into colour pass  
 Toward the last state they shall become.

Of insect size, I walk below  
 The red, green, greenish-black, and black,  
 And speculate. Can this quiet growth  
 Comprise at once the still-to-grow  
 And a full form without a lack?  
 And, if so, can I too be both?

I darken where perpetual  
 Action withdraws me from the sun.  
 Then from one high precocious stalk  
 A flower — its fulness reached — lets fall  
 Features, great petals, one by one  
 Shrivelling to gold across my walk.

## THE RESURRECTION

Elizabeth Jennings

I was the one who waited in the garden  
 Doubting the morning and the early light.  
 I watched the mist lift off its own soft burden  
 Permitting not believing my own sight.

If there were sudden noises I dismissed  
 Them as a trick of sound, a sleight of hand.  
 Not by a natural joy could I be blessed  
 Or trust a thing I could not understand.

Maybe I was a shadow thrown by one  
 Who, weeping, came to lift away the stone.  
 Or was I but the path on which the sun,  
 Too heavy for itself, was loosed and thrown?

I heard the voices and the recognition  
 And love like kisses heard between thin walls.  
 Were they my tears which fell, a real contrition,  
 Or simply April with its waterfalls?

It was by negatives I learnt my place.  
 The garden went on growing and I sensed  
 A sudden breeze that blew across my face.  
 Despair returned but now it danced, it danced.

## MISCARRIAGE

Richard Murphy

The things which have not happened haunt me most,  
 What has can be reclaimed another time.  
 Those ghosts that came to nothing are the worst  
 Or those the Church said were stuck in limbo.

My aborted child is one of these tonight  
 Remote as an Etruscan prince in clay,  
 Dropped from a safe womb into killing light,  
 Whatever future simply chucked away.

He should have done what I can never do  
 And on my bed of failures fed his flower.  
 But it's a spade I wield, a heavy stone  
 To stop the foxes digging, half a prayer  
 Of good intentions where the ritual's gone,  
 Which in their way can heal those ghosts, being true.

## A FABLE FOR LOVERS

Richard Murphy

All good that she gave me, leisure on land,  
 Love-child, her heart-chosen self, was real  
 And humbled me like shepherd's thankfulness  
 Counting his teaming ewes in the darkness:  
 But my darling, who lacked nothing, complained  
 No good lasted, and thereby lost it all.

The old Greek recipe for building well  
 Was to bury the mason's wife in stone:  
 They say that when the nut-hoarding squirrel  
 Chooses a girl and a tree it is for life:  
 Man for his own cocoon must surely weave  
 A home reinforced by his heart's skeleton.



Whatsoever is good is good here and now :  
 To have lost your roof-tree, but found this moment  
 Understanding, would be a fee not dear.  
 A gardener has left when his flowers show,  
 Houses are seldom inhabited by their builder :  
 So in our work let's put our merriment.

## EPITAPH ON A FIR-TREE      Richard Murphy

She grew ninety years through sombre winter,  
 Rhododendron summer of midges and rain  
 In a beech-wood scarred by the auctioneer,

Till a March evening, the garden work done,  
 It seemed her long life had been completed,  
 No further growth, no gaiety could remain.

At a wedding breakfast bridesmaids planted  
 With trowel and gloves this imported fir :  
 How soon, measured by trees, the party ended.

Arbour and crinoline have gone under  
 The laurel, gazebos under the yews.  
 Wood for wood, we have little to compare.

We think no more of granite steps and pews,  
 Or an officer patched with a crude trepan  
 Who fought in Rangoon for these quiet acres.

We are obsessed by money, sex and time  
 As they by conscience. Above both, the sun  
 Chips like an axe through the evergreen gloom,

Scatters the gold this crotchety woman  
 Had locked in drawers. The evening is ours.  
 Those faded girls who earthed her up are gone.

Except for daffodils, the ground is bare;  
 We two are left. They walked through pergolas  
 And planted well, so that we might do better.

## BERLIN

D. J. Enright

1. *Shame*

' Shame on you, fallen leaves, that thus insult  
The ordered avenues of Grunewald!'

Strong ready men beat up the lanes,  
They show they know what cleaning means.

Leaves fall in one long flutter in the van;  
As if the issue were in doubt when trees fight men.

' With so much vim we cannot groan away our guilt:  
Rather mop up the blood these trees have spilt.'

' Who better knows what spotlessness demands  
Than those who used to eat from dirty hands?'

' Stranger, so fair a sight should make you glad!  
We hid away the dying; now we hide the dead.'

Stacked with swaying leaves the wagon moves away;  
A force sways there to grow a forest, or to lay it low.

2. *Another World*

At three a.m.  
Birds' voices sugar all the city;  
Lightly through the complex ruins  
The young sun runs.

Blood rushes to the head  
Of every tall thermometer:  
So many, so pretty, the summer undresses!  
And happy people grumble at the heat,  
' zu heiss!'

Like lovers murmuring ' too beautiful!'

The bathing pools are drowned in bodies;  
Bewildered dogs dragged off on endless walks.  
Leaves ink their crenellations  
On the paper alleys:  
' So that is what you're like?' we whisper,  
blindly to the sky.

Like two new peonies  
 The enemy colleges blossom out;  
 For sun can seem a sort of liberty,  
 Sun, when so scarce, can seem a way of life.

The ' Porcupines ' lie supine in the west,  
 The eastern ' Thistle ' lowers her thorns.  
 Too hot for such hard humours!  
 The airs, the streets, the lamp-posts  
                   come into their own,  
 Like soft drinks, sandals and verandahs.

At midnight under window-boxes  
 Dumb walls are gurgling with delight;  
 The sleepless people keep the night awake,  
 As summer's forces occupy the city.

At three a.m.  
 Birds' voices shower down their sugar :  
 The sun rides through the streets again.

### 3. *No Offence*

In no country  
 Are the disposal services more efficient.

Standardised dustbins  
 Fit precisely into the mouth of a large cylinder  
 Slung on a six-wheeled chassis.  
 Even the dustbin lid is raised mechanically  
 At the very last moment.  
 You could dispose of a corpse like this  
 Without giving the least offence.

In no country  
 Are the public lavatories more immaculately kept.  
 As neat as new pins, smelling of pine forests,  
 With a roar like distant Wagner  
 Your sins are washed away.

In no country  
 Do the ambulances arrive more promptly  
 You are lying on the stretcher  
 Before the police, the driver, the bystanders and the  
                   neighbouring shopkeepers  
 Have finished lecturing you.



In no country  
 Are the burial facilities more foolproof.  
 A few pfennigs a week, according to age,  
 Will procure you a very decent funeral.  
 You merely sign on the dotted line  
 And keep your payments regular.

In no country  
 Are the disposal services more efficient  
 — I reflect —  
 As I am sorted out, dressed down, lined up,  
 Shepherded through the door,  
 Marshalled across the smooth-faced asphalt,  
 And fed into the mouth of a large cylinder  
 Labelled 'Lufthansa'.

## NIGHT SCENE

Alan Neame

Past twelve. The mats in the mosque have been rolled up.  
 The tap troubles the fountain with unhurried drip.

From the finial of the dome the moon drops loop  
 On loop of light into the fountain like white rope.

Sharply Byzantine columns blackly slope  
 Across the fountain bowl. Carved tendrils creep.

Under the flagstones Christian martyrs keep  
 Quiet, but they entertain a vengeful hope.

Lower than they, in long-slaked lime, a group  
 Of bones attest cults of non-ethic type.

A clerk of the Ottoman Bank squirms in his sleep,  
 Dreaming of mountain resorts and a preposterous rape.

Vast blondes from an unattainable Europe  
 Jerk, pant and proffer alternate lip and nape.

Carved tendrils cling and clamber, darkly grope  
 Through the warm darkness to a tighter grip.

Madame Braganza's Cadillac lights dip,  
Tyres scream and graze an unsuspected step,

As a waif crouched against a chemist's shop  
Darts out to grab a gutter-gleaming grape.

Madame Braganza, startled from her nap,  
Clutches at the rope of pearls beneath her cape.

Albert Krikorian smiles, as he takes a sip  
Of orange juice, at the neatness of his coup,

Having just smuggled sixty kilograms of dope  
Aboard a United Nations hospital ship.

At the same minute, in a tourist trap  
Called the Bar Rose, the smiles of comradeship

Fade in American eyes: 'Thanks kid, but nope.'  
He smiles again and meditates escape,

Laughs candidly and with a practised slap  
Checks that the dollar-wad still rides his hip.

Alia, dancing alone on the blanched roof-top,  
Wishes the radio music would never stop.

Petals shed from the almond tree drop, drop  
Into the fountain bowl and the winds stoop

Down through the columns and the sails sweep  
Over the waves in little and the ripples lap.

So the whole night by coil and thrust and leap  
And dream and silhouette and stealth takes shape.

## AFTER THE FIRE

Margaret Owen

It was hard for us, healthy,  
 Not to seem fretful and thankless.  
 He had a doctor's eye, ironic and detached,  
 And kept himself from minor irritations,  
 Even his own. Spaas are full of the dying  
 And what's an unanswered letter, insolent gardener  
 Or a ruined meal to a mind  
 Thoughtful for the fear of death.

Now he stands on a chair,  
 Taking down pictures from a blackened wall. All faces  
 Long since dead or changed. And he cannot see them  
 Being part-blind since last April.  
 Last year he lost his wife — but kept still  
 His life to himself, the doctor's way.  
 Now his home, cut down to two rooms  
 From the old house, is fouled with smoke  
 And we — so long held off — intrude to help.  
 The fire thrust here, carrying away like wind  
 And easily, a bookcase, album, an irretrievable world.

We put the pictures in an old sheet,  
 Cover them up and lay them in a corner  
 With dog basket, fishing rod, dartboard.

Rubbing his eczema-fretted hands  
 He says with smiling and remote precision —  
 I being the least-known, least-near to him —  
 'I'll not get over this — it's done for me.'  
 And, as though turning from a bed,  
 Goes to touch charred papers on his desk,  
 Away from faces he's lived with,  
 Lying covered with a sheet.



## CONSIDERING A SUIT OF ARMOUR

Fergus Allen

When hares were caught by stableboys with bells  
And saints journeyed with eyes reversed in prayer,  
When chivalrous men with servants were depicted  
Disporting on a flowered field of gold,  
This nasty contrivance was all-too-often seen  
Being galloped about by some long-suffering horse.

Herzmund ( ' Baron ' ) was inside, lapped in sweat.  
Flexing the hinged and riveted shell, he peered  
For prey through slits above an iron snout.  
At night — the takings tossed into a chest —  
He dined grossly and aired his views on death  
While someone helpless screamed in a deep basement.

Charming vignette : but why, you say, be morbid?  
Consider the craftsmanship, the Vulcan skill,  
The arabesques engraved on the cuirass,  
The nimble patterns — and the entertaining  
Protection provided for the Baron's genitals;  
Think of it, if you like, as abstract sculpture.

Quite; but I think mainly of the confronted  
Traveller impaled by terror or in earnest,  
The mounted devil-dress glimpsed in the gloaming,  
The cornering and the wordless savagery.  
Yes, hung in public, armour is fair monument  
For those who see if not for those who look.

## BETJEMAN EN BLOC

*John Betjeman: Collected Poems.* (Murray, 15/-.)

WHAT exactly is Betjeman? Surely one of the rare figures on whom the aesthetic appetites of an age pivot and swing round to face an entirely new direction. It is hard to tell whether such figures govern or are governed by the tendencies they focus so sharply; individually they may not rank as major talents — Morris, Langley — but for a time they have the curious power to alter people's idea of what is beautiful. Throughout the work of the writer, broadcaster, propagandist and poet John Betjeman can be traced the same insistent pattern, a rejection of modernism. If the spirit of the first third of our century was onwards, upwards and outwards, the spirit of Betjeman was backwards, downwards and inwards. If the architecture of the age was Nuremberg, its heroes the working class, its concrete by-passes lit with sodium, Betjeman exalted Comper interiors, clergymen's widows, and gaslight. This opposition was not confined to aesthetics. If the age had no religious beliefs and thought everyone was a socialist nowadays, Betjeman professed Christianity and proclaimed a benevolent class system the best of all possible worlds. In a time of global concepts, Betjeman insisted on the little, the forgotten, the obscure: the privately-printed book of poems, the chapel behind the Corn Exchange, the local landscapes in the Museum (open weekdays 2 p.m. — 4 p.m.). And slowly our tastes have begun to turn his way. We have stopped laughing at the Victorians. Local history is a recognised syllabus subject in schools and universities. The glamour of left-wing politics has unaccountably dulled.

His *Collected Poems*, whose astonishing success (over 30,000 in two months) by now need not be underlined, show clearly that his position in literature is analogous. He is against the kind of poetry this century has made its own. He has written and created a taste for comprehensible poems in regular metre, and his themes have earned him every vituperative adjective in criticism — cosy, nostalgic, bogus, adolescent, snobbish, corrupt. This has not hindered the growth of his reputation. The three most noteworthy talents in post-Eliot English poetry, said Edmund Wilson last year, are Auden, Dylan Thomas and John Betjeman, and though an American is not likely to be the best judge of Betjeman's quality, at least Mr Wilson cannot be associated with the Princess Margaret/Top People/U- and Non-U *blague* that hangs obscuringly round Betjeman's name. Auden dedicated *The Age of Anxiety* to him. And he must have the largest public of any living poet. 'There has been nothing like it since *Don Juan*,' said his publishers, who of course also published *Don Juan*.

The chief significance of Betjeman as a poet is that he is a writer of talent and intelligence for whom the modern poetic revolution has simply not taken place. For him there has been no symbolism, no objective correlative, no T. S. Eliot or Ezra Pound, no rediscovery of myth or language as gesture, no *Seven Types* or *Some Versions*, no works of

criticism with titles like *Communication as Discipline* or *Implicit and Explicit Image-Obliquity in Sir Lewis Morris*. He has been carried through by properties and techniques common to all but his immediate predecessors: a belief that poetry is an emotional business, rather than an intellectual or a moral one, a belief in metre and rhyme as a means of enhancing emotion, a belief that a poem's meaning should be communicated directly and not by symbol. These were characteristics of poetry in the days when it was deemed a kind of supernatural possession. (How much today requires the hypothesis of divine inspiration?) And the result is that Betjeman's poems, however trivial or light-hearted their subject, always carry a kind of primitive vivacity that sets them apart from those of his contemporaries, and captures the reader's attention without his intellectual consent:

In among the silver birches winding ways of tarmac wander  
And the signs to Bussock Bottom, Tussock Wood and Windy Brake,  
Gabled lodges, tile-hung churches, catch the lights of our Lagonda  
As we drive to Wendy's party, lemon curd and Christmas cake.  
Rich the makes of motor whirring,  
Past the pine-plantation purring . . .

There is in Betjeman someone who weeps at Victorian ballads ('My heart finds rest, my heart finds rest in Thee') and roars out Edwardian comic songs ('There's something about a 'varsity man that distinguishes him from a cad'), someone to whom every Betjeman poem seems to *matter* in a rare refreshing way. For Betjeman's poetry is nothing if not personal: it is exclusively about things that impress, amuse, excite, anger or attract him, and — and this is most important — once a subject has established its claim on his attention, he never questions the legitimacy of his interest. Energy most modern poets spend on screening their impulses for security Betjeman puts into the poem. If this had not been so, he would have never been able to celebrate Pont Street and the doctor's intellectual wife in the decade of the Left Book Club, Miss Joan Hunter Dunn during the blitz, or *Sunday Afternoon Service* in the year of Labour's post-war victory:

Even the villas have a Sunday look.  
The Ransom mower's locked into the shed.  
'I have a splitting headache from the sun,'  
And bedroom windows flutter cheerful chintz  
Where, double-aspirined, a mother sleeps;  
While father in the loggia reads a book,  
Large, desultory, birthday-present size . . .

The public has been a long time taking him seriously partly because of this, but a much larger reason is of course that many of his poems are funny. Readers find it exceedingly difficult to combine the notions of being serious and being funny. Yet Betjeman is a particularly good example of this ambiguity, because the things that oftenest make him giggle — sex and class — clearly matter to him tremendously, and indeed they do to most of us. It may be that some of Betjeman's appeal springs from his



preparedness to release feelings we are not entirely unashamed of, and are therefore inclined to make fun of. Certainly the attraction of some of his verses is complex enough for any sophomore:

Gaily into Ruislip Gardens  
Runs the red electric train,  
With a thousand Ta's and Pardon's  
Daintily alights Elaine;  
Hurries down the concrete station  
With a frown of concentration,  
Out into the outskirt's edges  
Where a few surviving hedges  
Keep alive our lost Elysium — rural Middlesex again.

Well-cut Windsmoor flapping lightly,  
Jacqmar scarf of mauve and green  
Hiding hair which, Friday nightly,  
Delicately drowns in Drene;  
Fair Elaine the bobby-soxer,  
Fresh-complexioned with Innoxia,  
Gains the garden — father's hobby —  
Hangs her Windsmoor in the lobby,

Settles down to sandwich supper and the television screen.

This kind of writing has earned Betjeman the reputation of a right-wing satirist. But only obtuse reading could take this as a hostile portrait. Elaine, the mindless consumer of branded products, has declined from the Tennysonian standard her name recalls just as rural Middlesex is no longer the paradise of Betjeman's boyhood, but her frown of concentration and her Friday ritual are too endearing to suggest that Betjeman wants to do away with her. There is half a suggestion that the unquestioning simplicity of her life might be enviable. Again:

When shall I see the Thames again?  
The prow-promoted gems again,  
As beefy ATS  
Without their hats  
Come shooting through the bridge?  
And 'cheerioh' and 'cheeribye'  
Across the waste of waters die,  
And low the mists of evening lie  
And lightly skims the midge.

Only Betjeman would use the ATS and their valedictions as part of a topographical evocation, instead of as a contrast to it. And when he writes of the death of a working-class mother: \*

But her place is empty in the queue at the International,  
The greengrocer's queue lacks one,

---

\*This poem, *Variations on a Theme by T. W. Rolleston*, is unaccountably missing from the volume under review.

So does the crowd at Macfisheries. There's no one to go to Freeman's  
To ask if the shoes are done.

the element of satire is entirely missing, and we are bound to concede that, comic or serious or serio-comic or whatever we please, Betjeman is an acceptor, not a rejecter, of the life of his time and the people who live it. The idea that he is a precious aesthete whose sensibilities are alternately quivering before Victoriana and shuddering at words like 'serviette' is wholly wrong. On the contrary, he is a robust and responsive writer, registering 'Dear old, bloody old England' with vivacious precision and affectionate alliteration quite beyond most avowed social realists. His gusto embraces it all — the mouldy remnants of the nineteenth century, the appalling monoliths of the twentieth, the dead Church, the dying peasantry, the conurbation and candy-floss and King's College, Cambridge, all the sadness and silliness and snobbery is potential Betjeman material. Satire in Betjeman either dissolves in laughter and affection before it reaches its target, or else it never quite comes to life:

... The children have a motor-bus instead,  
And in a town eleven miles away  
We train them to be 'Citizens of Today'  
And many a cultivated hour they pass  
In a fine school with walls of vita-glass.  
Civics, eurhythmics, economics, Marx,  
How-to-respect-wild-life-in-National Parks;  
Plastics, gymnastics — thus they learn to scorn  
The old thatch'd cottages where they were born.  
The girls, ambitious to begin their lives  
Serving in Woolworth's, rather than as wives;  
The boys, who cannot yet escape the land,  
At driving tractors lend a clumsy hand.  
An eight-hour day for all, and more than three  
Of these are occupied with making tea  
And talking over what we all agree —  
Though 'Music while you work' is now our wont,  
It's not so nice as 'Music while you don't'.

This Peter-Simplified view of England, perhaps not more unjust than views from the opposite side from 'Wystan, Rex, all of you who have not fled' in the 'thirties, shows the political colour of Betjeman's adherences. But broad political generalisation of any shade robs Betjeman of one of his style's chief weapons — the precise name, the unique instance ('Oh! Fuller's angel-cake, Robertson's marmalade' etc.), and this lack of particularity lessens his power to convince. His villainous Town Clerk is just a bogey, his Welfare State education a very distant prospect. The real explanation may be that Betjeman is too much of his age — he is after all a TV star, not a hermit — to attack it convincingly.

Beside this informed relish of the present stands Betjeman's enormous sense of the past — or, to be more exact, of the last century:

... The still-new stucco on the London clay,  
Hot summer silence over Holloway,

Dissenting chapels, tea-bowers, lovers' lairs,  
Neat new-built villas, ample Grecian squares,  
Remaining orchards ripen Windsor pears.

Hot silence where the older mansions hide  
On Highgate Hill's thick elm-encrusted side,  
And Pancras, Hornsey, Islington divide . . .

... From various black Victorian towers  
The Sunday evening bells  
Came pealing over dales and hills  
And tanneries and silent mills  
And lowly streets where country stops  
And little shuttered corner shops . . .

In these startlingly-vivid evocations of the Victorian town that Betjeman has done so much to reinstate in public taste there is much of Morris's exhortation to dream of London small and white and clean. But in Betjeman there is a much deeper emotional involvement. It is almost as if it were a Paradise and he were irrevocably shut out of it by being born at all. Betjeman has an acute response to the doctrine of the Fall — 'Not my vegetarian dinner, not my lime-juice minus gin, / Quite can drown a faint conviction that we may be born in sin'; 'How did the Devil come? When first attack? / These Norfolk lanes recall lost innocence' — and his passionate celebration of Edwardian and Victorian times is less a sign of conventional Freudian 'regression' than of a yearning for a world, as it were, unburdened by himself:

These were the houses they knew; and I, by descent, belong  
To these tall neglected houses divided into flats.  
Only the church remains, where carriages used to throng  
And my mother stepped out in flounces and my father  
stepped out in spats  
To shadowy stained-glass matins or gas-lit evensong  
And back in a country quiet with doffing of chimney hats.

He is sensitive too to the passing of time and its sad dispersals:

There in pinnacled protection,  
One extinguished family waits  
A Church of Ireland resurrection  
By the broken, rusty gates.  
Sheepswool, straw, and droppings cover  
Graves of spinster, rake and lover,  
Whose fantastic mausoleum  
Sings its own seablown Te Deum,  
In and out the slipping slates.



It is only a short step from this awareness to the dread of death that has appeared more and more frequently in the last fifteen years. This has not produced his best poems, nor would one expect it to. Fear of death is too much of a screaming close-up to allow the poetic faculty to function properly, but demands expression by reason of its very frightfulness. None the less it benefits his poetry, making the colours brighter and the beauties more transiently poignant by contrast, giving a seasoning of honesty and a grim sense of proportion that 'reconciled' writers all too often lack. It is typical of Betjeman's sincerity that he is prepared to acknowledge that his religious beliefs cannot banish the disquiet inseparable from ideas of oblivion. In a way, it is typical of his religion, too, which is far from the dramatic 'conversional' kind frequently favoured by literary men. Betjeman came to the Church of England by admiring its architecture, and his beliefs seem dependent not only on actual churches and their furniture but on England itself and its everyday life:

And London shops on Christmas Eve  
 Are strung with silver bells and flowers  
 As hurrying clerks the City leave  
 To pigeon-haunted classic towers,  
 And marbled clouds go scudding by  
 The many-steeped London sky.

And girls in slacks remember Dad,  
 And oafish louts remember Mum . . .

Some readers find Betjeman's religion has an appearance of affectation for this reason, as if it would not exist outside the familiar Betjeman scene. Religious feeling should be more free of the accidents of time and place if it is to sound natural: it should not seem to require Tortoise stoves and box pews, nor be distracted by the wiring of a public address system. But the whole strength of Betjeman's poetry is that it is written from his feelings and no one else's: his kind of religion has a right to be accepted in the same way as his kind of girl. Betjeman resembles the old gentleman who deleted from his prayer book all expressions praising God, in the belief that they would be distasteful to that well-bred Person. We cannot call beliefs insincere just because they cannot be divorced from character.

But some critics of Betjeman's ethos go further, claiming that any sincere religious feeling should make his open interest in class distinction impossible, and deploring what they call his readiness to side with the richer governing class in order to laugh at those with different class habits. I think this criticism is based on a misunderstanding. Betjeman is undeniably fascinated by class habits, but rather as Professor Higgins was fascinated by speech habits. Just as Higgins could place Eliza in Lissom Grove by her vowels, so Betjeman can place Elaine in Ruislip Gardens by her Windmoor and Jacqmar scarf. It is a kind of social expertise peculiar to certain writers — Mary McCarthy is another — to hit off character and situation by such means, by always insisting on the

brand and the name and the make and the actual expression and the details of clothes and furniture:

And plants for indoors are the fashion —  
 Or so the *News Chronicle* said —  
 So I've ventured some housekeeping cash on  
 A cactus which seems to be dead.  
 An artist with whom we're acquainted  
 Has stippled the dining-room stove  
 And the walls are alternately painted  
 Off-yellow and festival mauve.

I cannot see why Betjeman should be crimed for bringing off the subtle class-suggestiveness of the fifth line of that verse, for instance. It is just what people like that would say, and as admirable a stroke as the cheerioh and cheeribye of the ATS. Again, many readers have complained about *How To Get On In Society*, a poem made up almost entirely of solecism and false gentility, and originally set as a competition in *Time and Tide*, presumably to see who could spot the greatest number of *gaffes*. Here again I think readers have misunderstood Betjeman's intention. The poem satirises a woman who is trying to 'get on in society' by assuming a 'superior' manner of talk and behaviour. It is not laughing at natural class-habits, like dropped h's, but at 'superior' unnatural ones going off half-cock ('Are the requisites all in the toilet?'). This seems to me legitimate.

Betjeman is a kind of distorting mirror in which all the catch-phrases of modern criticism appear in gross unacceptable parody. He is *committed*, *ambiguous*, and *ironic*; he is *conscious of literary tradition*, but does not quote the right authors. He is a *satirist*, but his satire, directed against liberal atheists, hums disconcertingly round our own ears. He has his own *White Goddess*, in blazer and shorts. And he has *forged a personal utterance, created a private myth, brought a new language and new properties to poetry*, and even, since the publication of his *Collected Poems*, *given poetry back to the general reader*, all these equally undeniably, yet none of them quite in the way we meant. No wonder our keen critical tools twitch fretfully at his approach.

If we are to take Betjeman seriously, what kind of seriousness does he exemplify? As I said before, his chief claim on our attention is that he has changed our idea of what is beautiful. This is not simply a matter of creating a new fashion in architectural appreciation, or putting into currency a new set of aesthetic attitudes. For his feeling for the present is at least as strong as his feeling for the past, and the paradox of his work is that it has for the first time brought into poetic focus Elaine and the concrete platform at Ruislip Gardens, the very things that have displaced the lost Elysium of rural Middlesex.

Boys and girls  
 Weed in the sterile garden, mostly sand  
 And dead tomato-plants and chicken-runs.  
 Today they cleaned the dulled Benares ware

(Dulled by the sea-mist), early made the beds,  
 And Phoebe twirled the icing round the cake  
 And Gordon tinkered with the gramophone  
 While into an immense enamel jug  
 Norman poured 'Eiffel Tower' for lemonade.

The 'funniness' of Betjeman's poetry is on the wane, and instead of taking the poems with it, as many expected, there is left a confident apprehension of the look and sound of present-day England and its inhabitants, and an unhesitating demonstration of the kind of poetry that can be made of them:

From the geyser ventilators  
 Autumn winds are blowing down  
 On a thousand business women  
 Having baths in Camden Town . . .

Deep down the drive go the cushioned rhododendrons,  
 Deep down, sand deep, drives the heather root,  
 Deep the spliced timber barked around the summer-house,  
 Light lies the tennis-court, plantain underfoot.  
 What a winter welcome to what a Surrey homestead!  
 Oh! the metal lantern and white enamelled door!  
 Oh! the spread of orange from the gas-fire on the carpet!  
 Oh! the tiny patter, sandalled footsteps on the floor! . . .

Keys with Mr Groombridge, but nobody will take them  
 To her lonely cottage by the lonely oak  
 Potatoes in the garden, but nobody to bake them  
 Fungus in the living room and water in the coke . . .

Of the poetry Betjeman has made of the past there is no need to speak. If today a railway lamp, a Norman Shaw house or a Victorian interior seems beautiful or affecting, this is largely his doing. But again this is not a question of starting a new fad in taste, but of making us see in what way these things represent vanished societies made up of such people as ourselves, who will in turn vanish as they did. Behind Elaine and Ruislip Gardens Betjeman can see Middlesex as it was, not in the spirit of someone looking for anti-planning, anti-red-tape-and-concrete propaganda, but in an evocation, seemingly as effortless as it is exquisite, of England before 1914, and its shadowy perspectives that reach back into the previous century:

Parish of enormous hayfields  
 Perivale stood all alone,  
 And from Greenford scent of mayfields  
 Most enticingly was blown  
 Over market gardens tidy,  
 Taverns for the *bona fide*,  
 Cockney anglers, cockney shooters,  
 Murray Poshes, Lupin Pooters



Long in Kensal Green and Highgate silent under soot and stone.

The meeting and conflict of present and past is one of Betjeman's most fruitful situations for poetry, as it was for Hardy, and lies behind many of his best climaxes:

Cancer has killed him. Heart is killing her.

The trees are down. An Odeon flashes fire

Where stood their villa by the murmuring fir . . .

But the strongest and most enduring thread that runs through the contradictions of impulse in this puzzling dazzling body of work is a quite unfeigned and uninflated fascination by human beings. From the Wykehamist, the Death in Leamington, and the 'Varsity Students right through to Eunice, the lady who reads the *News Chronicle*, and the Little Sister of the Hanging Pyx, Betjeman has always written about people, sometimes mockingly, sometimes angrily, but never unfeelingly. Human lives, and human lives in time, are his central themes; neither the screens he throws up of absurdity and satire, nor the amount of exploring he does down alleys of minor interests, should prevent the recognition of his poetry's lasting quality as well as its novelty.

As for this book, you will of course buy it; it is in print again now with some of the more obvious misprints removed, but 'Chirst' on page 123 surprisingly remains, and 'I know that I wanted to ask you' on page 243 should surely be 'what I wanted'. I hereby offer to correct the proofs of Betjeman's next book of poems for nothing, if that is the only way to protect them from such blemishes. The printing and binding are charming. The Earl of Birkenhead's *Introduction* is not as good as Warden Sparrow's in 1945, nor the author's own in 1948. The selection — all that the Earl of Birkenhead wishes to preserve — is, with the exception already noted, not bad.

Philip Larkin

## THE ILLUSTRIOUS OBSCURE, PRESSED AND PACKED

*The Chequer'd Shade*, John Press. (O.U.P., 25/-.)

*Wallace Stevens*, Robert Pack. (Rutgers University Press, \$4.50.)

To obscurity in poetry, a topic of much importance and regrettable extent, Mr Press brings a clear style, an admirably wide range of reference and illustration, a gift for clarification, and the best of intentions. Unhappily, some bad fairy — probably Religion — has largely nullified these merits. At any rate, the reader feels that as he goes on *The Chequer'd Shade* comes to be an unwitting apology for obscurity instead of the judicial assessment initially promised; and the concluding pages seem to show why, notwithstanding the author's good intentions, this should be so. For Mr Press there sees poetry as a sort of handmaid to religion and

is thus led to the conclusion that 'it can never hope to discard that element of obscurity which is the shadow thrown by an ampler and diviner radiance.' Numerous references in Maritainesque manner to those (surely nonexistent?) bogymen the 'arrogant', 'scurrying' and 'optimistic' rationalists, who don't believe in evil or the subconscious, are a further indication of that drift (from religion to anti-rationalism and on to a subconscious approval of obscurity) which was probably responsible for bearing the study from its proper course and turning it into a good book twenty years out of date — the time for excusing modern obscurity being long past.

All this accounts for the unusual phenomenon of a style much clearer than the thought. Obviously some inner resistance inhibited rigour. Thus, for example, Mr Press writes:

Charles Causley . . . manages to combine . . . obscurity of expression with poetic exactness (p. 19).

But if the expression is obscure it cannot be *known* to be exact; if it is known to be exact it cannot be obscure. Again:

Empson (has not) scrupled to pillage both classical mythology and the whole realm of scientific knowledge in his search for images and concepts which he then proceeds to telescope with a fiendish ingenuity . . . and those who object to the range of his thought . . . are in effect demanding that poetry should not attempt to survey the whole province of human thought (and therefore) would condemn poetry to intellectual debility and expose it to contempt (p. 41).

True, but surely what people actually object to is the telescoping not the range. That's the problem needs tackling, and it is not so easy to dismiss. Or:

How does it come about that highly-intelligent men are so frequently baffled and infuriated by originality in a work of art? (p. 73).

A good question. But in this context it implies that obscurity is equivalent to originality, which is untrue.

Thomas imposed upon himself far more strict formal limits than would commend themselves to conservative poets who still persist in thinking that his poems are as shapeless and aimless as a splurge of molten lava. Poets who develop their argument in a ratiocinative sequence set themselves a far easier task than those who employ the rigorous, intricate and unrelenting logic of images (p. 175).

Poems could be shapely and aimless. Certainly neither 'logic' nor 'rigour' seems properly applicable to Thomas's own account — quoted on the previous page — of letting one image 'breed another'

Similarly weighted are some of the illustrations:

The hearts  
That spaniel'd me at heels, to whom I gave

Their wishes, do discandie, melt their sweets  
On blossoming Caesar (p. 195)

This may be confused, in so far as the metaphors are mixed, but it is hardly obscure in the manner of much modern poetry. Anyone could give a *general* paraphrase.

Such points are of course comparatively trivial. Most authors could be caught out now and again in the course of a long book. In this case, however, they are symptomatic of a central flaw.

Two main themes are implicit in this work: first, the idea that people have complained in the past of the obscurity of poets now illustrious, and therefore we ought to beware of complaining about it; second, the idea that our world is much more complex, chaotic and divided than earlier ones were. These are well-entrenched notions, but are they true?

Even if both ideas *were* true, they would be unhelpful, because they contradict each other in their implications. You can't reasonably claim support for modern obscurity by citing the obscurity of the mighty dead, and at the same time say it's due to a uniquely difficult, modern situation. If you do, this sort of thing happens:

In Shakespeare's day, even in Johnson's day, all men with any pretensions to culture shared a common heritage, a fund of traditional myths, sacred books, accumulated knowledge. . . . All this is too obvious to dwell on, and it should be equally obvious that poetry is bound to become increasingly obscure as a culture grows more fissiparous (p. 66).

Ben Jonson prophesied to Wm Drummond that John Donne 'for not being understood, would perish' (p. 68).

Anyway, both themes are in fact suspect. Firstly, if some of the great were and are obscure it does not follow that obscurity is good or that it may be a mark of greatness. Secondly, it certainly need not imply that the obscure are great. Thirdly, the evidence of history goes to show that men of Shakespeare's or Johnson's (or any other) day would have been surprised to hear that they lived in a coherent world. Do 'we know that the medieval portrayal of the world revealed, or invented, a coherence, a meaning, in the pattern of existence' (p. 109)? We are often told so, but people were arguing and disagreeing and killing, torturing and burning each other throughout the Middle Ages. Surely, too, the feudal system and poor communications made for a more fissiparous world than ours, as did ignorance, the proliferation of rumour and superstition, and lack of techniques for systematising knowledge. It seems more likely that modern communications, education, and the techniques of statistical-, psycho-, and linguistic-analysis have in fact greatly simplified, unified and clarified our world-picture (though no-one would deny that it's still pretty dark). To say otherwise seems suspiciously like finding an easy excuse, instead of a good reason for one's failures.

Both Mr Press's lines run from T. S. Eliot. But Eliot has an axe to grind, is no scientist, and has never got farther than Bradley in philosophy. Neither line clearly indicates why poetry should not still be



capable of the traditional 'intelligible argument, narrative, firm grammatical structure, didactic teaching, comment upon widely shared problems, the illumination of humdrum workaday experience' (p. 187), at any rate if it wants to be. Indeed, some recent poetry (and Betjeman all along) shows it still is.

So in spite of its admirable range and wealth of material, and in spite of many interesting and acute comments (particularly in 'Indifferent Writers' and 'Themes and Images') Mr Press finally fails to produce the work he seemed to promise.

Wallace Stevens, of course, sees poetry as a sort of handmaid to humanism, so the considerable 'element of obscurity' in his work is obviously not any 'shadow thrown by an ampler and diviner radiance'. Mr Pack *can*, therefore, 'hope to discard' it, and in fact very competently does so.

His task is much more limited than that Mr Press set himself, but no less necessary, for Stevens is both difficult and important. Important, as the creator of a sensible secular myth rich with poetic potential — a rare and much needed thing today — and difficult, because his subject-matter resists rendering in poetic terms. Stevens is a philosophical poet in a fairly strict sense. That is to say he is concerned not to propagate any party-line or any personal feeling but to find out an abstract truth about the world and man experiencing it; and he knows the difference between metaphysics and philosophy proper. Why then write poetry and not philosophy? Because the view he comes to demands to be illustrated by enactment. Mr Pack sums it up cogently (p. 82):

Reality without imagination is mere fact; imagination without reality, mere fancy. Stevens continues to argue for their unity: 'The imagination loses vitality as it ceases to adhere to what is real.' And also, 'The world about us would be desolate except for the world within us.'

This theory of perception seems not dissimilar to a philosophical expansion of Keats's idea that 'Beauty is truth, truth beauty', if we take it that he did *not* mean the two halves of that statement to be synonymous. What Stevens adds to Keats (among other things) is Coleridge's view that imagination 'discovers order, but also imposes it' (His use, too, of the giant Hero to represent 'the realms of possibility open to man' seems to owe something to Blake's Giant Albion). But Stevens sees more clearly than the Romantics that in the cyclic interaction of the given ('reality') and the experience ('seeming') of a percipient with an innate aesthetic need for order, there must always be a 'fading'. Each pole's successful attraction needs to be countered by a contrary movement. Stasis would be a lapse into thingdom.

At this point Mr Pack's book comes in very handy. As Stevens dramatizes this truth, reveals the working of the mind, without having to generalize about it' (p. 172) someone is required to give an expository substitute for the generalisations that might have been. (Mr Pack is not

concerned with the question whether a few more *should* have been, for clarity's sake). Consequently, even mere listing, when its correctness is confirmed by quotation, can be of value:

When he is talking about 'Reality' the associated images he consistently gives us are earth, rock, sun, day, green north, winter, nature and body; when he is talking about the 'imaginary', the associated images are: musical instruments, air, moon, night, blue, south, summer, art and mind (p. 194).

The symbols that Stevens uses to describe the abstraction of 'nothingness' (*minimal perception of the given*) are: glass, air, ice, light, and winter-cold (p. 123).

But Mr Pack's exposition is not limited to such elementary explication. Though he never achieves the compact criticism of, say, Alvarez's essay on Stevens in *The Shaping Spirit*, he makes it possible for the uninitiated reader more fully to appreciate that subtler criticism. He demonstrates clearly the unexpected sensuousness of Stevens' work, its comic mode, and its thoughtfulness; and when he explains the obscure becomes pellucid (though not necessarily, therefore, justified).

'Death is the mother of beauty' is a fairly hard line, but only because it expresses a fairly hard thought:

Without death, we would take no passionate pleasure in the world, we would not feel its sensuousness, for there is no necessity or compulsion to possess that which is always there and which does not change (p. 28).

Simple. If this is not the highest form of criticism, it is at least an indispensable preliminary to the appreciation of one of the most distinguished of modern poets, and one of the very few poets who have ever managed to celebrate not only body, but also spirit and imagination more fully than the Augustans without becoming transcendental and immaterialist like the Romantics.

*Allan Rodway*

## INSIGHT AND OUTLOOK

*Seeing is Believing*, Charles Tomlinson. (McDowell, Obolensky, \$3.00.)

*A Sense of the World*, Elizabeth Jennings. (Deutsch, 10/6.)

*Another September*, Thomas Kinsella. (The Dolmen Press, 10/6.)

THE title of Charles Tomlinson's new volume is well chosen. In many of these poems, the energy of the language reflects an unusually intense visual power; the skill with which objects are recorded is made to show how ways of seeing and ways of thinking interlock. The first poem in the book ('The Atlantic') is a good example of Tomlinson's meticulous observation, which grasps not only the detail, but also the dynamic

pattern of a scene. Just as characteristic is the way in which at the climax of this poem — an image of the sun caught in a receding patch of water — the description moves easily into a final statement:

... Neither (i.e. sun nor ripple) survives the instant  
 But is caught back, and leaves, like the after-image  
 Released from the floor of a now different mind,  
 A quick gold, dyeing the uncovering beach  
 With sunglaze. That which we were,  
 Confronted by all that we are not,  
 Grasps in subservience its replenishment.

The strength of such poems ('Reflections' is another good one of this kind) is partly in the skill with which they modulate between concrete and abstract and partly in their sureness of diction. Most of them are as carefully written as those in Tomlinson's earlier volume, *The Necklace*, but his range has increased enormously, and with it the scope of his blank-verse. The influence of Wallace Stevens is still important, though Tomlinson is coming to rely more and more on his own discoveries. In 'Tramontana at Lerici', a scene is thrown into relief by imagining its effect on different kinds of people. Though the device itself suggests Stevens, the precision of the language and the occasional irony are Tomlinson's own:

Leaf-dapples sharpen. Emboldened by this clarity  
 The minds of artificers would turn prismatic,  
 Running on lace perforated in crisp wafers  
 That could cut like steel. Constitutions,  
 Drafted under this fecund chill, would be annulled  
 For the strictness of their equity, the moderation of their pity.

The longer meditative poems ('The Mausoleum', 'A Meditation on John Constable', 'On the Hall at Stowey', 'The Ruin') are a new and entirely successful departure; they should do much to correct the view that Tomlinson is an 'artificial' poet, working only at rarefied levels. Each of them deserves a detailed commentary: from the earlier volume alone, I should not have guessed at his ability to sustain poems of this length. In retrospect, however, the continuity is clear; on the whole, the diction of the shorter poems is carried over without mishap, and its precision goes well with the moral seriousness of the themes. In particular, 'A Meditation on John Constable', with its mixture of fine sense-impressions and difficult truths, is one of the best things Tomlinson has done so far. This is an exciting book in many ways; English publishers please note.

*A Sense of the World* is Miss Jennings' third collection and, I think, her best. Reading her earlier work, one sometimes felt that the poetic mechanism was working too easily and that moral conclusions were being drawn from insufficient evidence. This is still true of a few poems in the present book. 'Old Man', for instance, ends:



And we move around him, are his own world turning,  
 Spinning it seems to him, leaving no shadow  
 To blaze our trail. We are our actions only:  
 He is himself, abundant and assured,

All action thrown away,

And time is slowing where his shadow stands.

The diction is still on the thin side; unless one is on one's guard, it's possible to be carried on to the end of the poem without fully realising the choices one is being asked to accept. Bad reading? Perhaps; but this use of 'we' often takes too much for granted: in this particular instance, it makes for a pleasing contrast, but we may feel that old age is not always like this, or that 'actions' deserve a higher valuation.

Once one has said this — and these criticisms affect only a small part of Miss Jennings' work — there is a great deal left to praise. In several poems she plays off the child's world against the adult's; these are among her best, and I particularly liked the one called 'Telling Stories'. Here the conclusion lifts beautifully out of the rest (it is addressed to a child):

Such is the trust you have not in large things  
 But in the placing of  
 A verb, an adjective, a happy end.  
 The stories that we tell, we tell against  
 Ourselves then at the last  
 Since all the worlds we make we stand outside

Leaning on time and swayed about by it

While you stand firm within the fragile plot.

These poems about children deal with one of Miss Jennings' main preoccupations: the sense of separateness and identity. Many of her poems are concerned with differences — between the individual and others, or between people and places ('There is no sign of us where we have been'). The best ones tend to be the most disturbing: 'A Fear', 'The Parting', and above all 'The Shot' — a remarkable piece, with something of the odd clarity of Emily Dickinson. But perhaps most decisive for Miss Jennings' future are the dozen or so religious poems at the end of the book. These are clearly the result of deep experience and the desire for honest expression of personal conflicts. In literary terms, this seems to have brought about a greater flexibility of diction and occasionally a new poetic density, as in the fine prose-poem 'Teresa of Avila'. These new developments seem very promising; meanwhile, the present volume can be strongly recommended.

*Another September* is Thomas Kinsella's first collection, and it shows him already as a poet of considerable range and power. Though he lives and writes in Dublin, it would be a mistake to regard him as an Anglo-Irish poet — in poetry of such distinction, this kind of label no longer matters. Here, at least, is a writer whose poems really *grow*; his metaphors unfold at a touch and continue to do so on each re-reading:

Ended and done with ' never ceases,  
 Constantly the heart releases  
 Wild geese to the past.  
 Look, how they circle poignant places,  
 Falling to sorrow's fowling-pieces  
 With soft plumage aghast.

This, of course, owes something to Auden — a debt which recurs but which is never allowed to dominate. It is most obvious, perhaps, in 'Test Case', yet this seems to me one of the most successful poems in the book, both for the strength of its language and its splendidly-poised humour.

Three or four of these poems — notably 'Ulysses', 'Priest and Emperor' and 'The Fifth Season' are more difficult than the rest. All of them contain striking passages; the difficulty is in their organization. Even so, I think the amount they do communicate justifies their inclusion; if they are obscure, they are never dull, and the writing seems just as assured as in the rest of the volume.

Kinsella is a difficult poet to quote from, since many of his best effects need space. His various themes are linked by a sense of the passage of time and especially of its destructive effect on human relationships. In this mood, he can write two poems as good and as different from one another as 'Death of a Queen' and 'Baggot Street Deserta'. Several of the poems in this book ought to find their way into future anthologies; the one which certainly will is 'Thinking of Mr D.', a fine combination of skill and feeling, full of vivid detail and with a beautifully-controlled ending:

... When he died  
 I saw him twice: once as he used retire,  
 On one last murmured, stabbing little tale,  
 From the right company, tucking in his scarf,  
 A barren Dante leaving us for hell;  
 Then, loping through that image, under wharf-  
 Lamps that plunged him in and out of light,  
 A priestlike figure turning, wolfish-slim,  
 Quickly aside from pain, in a bodily plight,  
 To note the oiled reflections chime and swim.

*Arthur Terry*

